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**Toward Global Theatre for Young Audiences:  
The potential of international TYA to increase the  
global consciousness of young audiences in the United States**

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**Toward Global Theatre for Young Audiences:  
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**by**

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**Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

### **Toward Global Theatre for Young Audiences: The potential of international TYA to increase the global consciousness of young audiences in the United States**

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This thesis document provides an historical overview of the internationalization of theatre for young audiences (TYA) in the United States, which has been largely influenced by international populations and organizations since the early 1900's. Contemporary practices and theories of international education are examined in order to consider its intersections with international TYA. Emphasizing Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions and the research of established and emerging TYA scholars, I examine international TYA's potential to increase the global consciousness of young audiences in the U.S. Through developing global sensitivity, global understanding, and global self (Veronica Boix Mansilla and Howard Gardner's three components of global consciousness), international TYA presents diverse cultures and stories to young audiences, potentially dispelling stereotyping and ethnocentrism, promoting a global consciousness through theatre's provocation of empathy.

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## **Introduction: Why International Theatre for Young Audiences?**

### **EPISODE ONE: *LITTLE PANDA IN A BIG BIG WORLD***

I became a traveler in the summer of 2006, when I journeyed the Pacific Rim on Semester at Sea, a cruise ship converted into a floating university. While I had been a privileged international traveler growing up, visiting family in Canada, exploring border towns in Mexico, and spending two weeks in Israel in eighth-grade to learn about my Jewish American identity, this trip was different. I chose to study on Semester at Sea in order to learn about a different region of the world, and cultures I had never previously experienced. In sixty-five days, Semester at Sea took 400 curious college students to eight East and Southeast Asian countries. Our shipboard classes prepared us for each arrival, as professors from around the United States introduced us to the history, culture, and traditions we would encounter in each country.

As a part of my Survey of Asian Theatre class, I experienced traditional performances in many of our ports, including Vietnamese water puppetry, Bunraku – Japanese rod puppetry, and Jingju – Chinese opera. These tourist-friendly performances showcased stunning displays of centuries-old traditions, allowing me, a U.S. American artist, to experience their contemporary manifestations.

In Hong Kong, my experience proved unique when I saw an advertisement for the International Arts Carnival (IAC). Rather than traditional performances primarily intended for tourists, the IAC is an annual festival sponsored by Hong Kong's Leisure and Cultural Services Department, with a primary audience of local children and families (IAC website). Selecting from a wide array of international performances, interactive art installations, and arts workshops, I purchased tickets to Hong Kong Dance Company's

production of *Little Panda in a Big Big World*. While the production included aspects of traditional Chinese performance, including acrobatics and production values, its primary intention was to present a high quality professional production featuring professional adult performers that youth and adults could enjoy together.

The performance conveyed the story of a young panda's displacement from his natural home due to human development and pollution. It revealed his journey searching for his home and identity, along with the exciting and sometimes scary events he encountered along his way. The production featured Cantonese song lyrics and Mandarin subtitles – neither of which I understood. In an audience of a few hundred, I appeared to be the only spectator of non-Chinese ethnicity. Yet, my emotional responses to the panda's story were consistent with the verbal and physical responses of the children around me. Despite my language and cultural orientation, my empathy toward the panda during his journey appeared to be as strong as that of the local audience.

Leaving the theatre, stopping for a picture with the actors in costume and makeup, I wondered how U.S. American children would respond to the performance. Would they be as engaged as I was, despite the language barrier (and despite my being an adult)? Would their verbal and physical reactions be as strong as those I witnessed by the Hong Kong children in the audience? Would they question the interactions of the panda and his grandparents, as Chinese cultural dimensions differ so greatly from those dominant in the U.S.? What might they learn about urban development and the experience of growing up in Hong Kong?

*Little Panda in a Big Big World* remains a landmark in my international theatre for young audiences (TYA) experience. Not only did I thoroughly enjoy the production, becoming lost in the journey and spectacle unfolding on stage, it was also the first time a



play provoked such monumental questions about the global experience. My personal journey to create dialogue around international TYA had officially begun.

## **EPISODE TWO: CULTURAL DIMENSIONS IN SINGAPORE**

Semester at Sea's classes taught me facts about Southeast Asia's history and traditions, while the in-country expeditions taught me how to act within the vastly different cultures I experienced. Semester at Sea's second stop was Singapore, where I met with Noorlinah Mohamed, who was at the time the president of the Singapore Drama Educators Association (SDEA). Knowing I aspired to spend a year teaching drama in Singapore, Noorlinah agreed for SDEA to sponsor my return. With the support of a Fulbright Fellowship, I had the unique opportunity to teach Singaporean students in the local schools (by contrast, most foreign teachers in Singapore teach international students in international schools). I taught in six public schools, engaging with students of varying ethnic and economic backgrounds. While my students represented their own cultures in Singapore's multicultural landscape, I was continually struck by their shared cultural traits, many of which varied greatly from my own.

Having studied and taught in U.S. American schools, I expected students to share their voices in class, posing their own perspectives and challenging teachers' comments. In Singapore, I was instantly amazed at the hierarchical relationship between students and teachers. In the U.S., students often make eye contact and shout my name from across the room. In Singapore, the students averted my eyes and demurely bowed their heads when speaking to me in class. At one school, students I had never seen before would step aside in the hall to allow my clear passage, while nodding their heads and saying "Good

morning, Miss.” While I could not separate myself from the cultural capitol I introduced to the hallways as a tall white woman, such behavior was typical to all teachers.

While cultural and school etiquette varies within the U.S., the physical gestures I repeatedly experienced and observed in Singapore typify their cultural dimensions. Cultural theorist Geert Hofstede examines patterns and behaviors around the world, exploring how and why people behave in certain ways. One such measurement is the Power Distance Index (PDI), providing a marker of classified inequalities between those with and without power. My U.S. American cultural reference point measures a PDI of 40; Singapore’s is 74. This means that the distance between those ‘in power’ (teachers, elderly, bosses, and so forth) and their ‘subordinates,’ is nearly double in Singapore than the U.S.; or, students in the U.S. are twice as likely as their counterparts in Singapore to see themselves as independent thinkers in the presence of their teachers (25-27).

Given these cultural variances, I wondered what would happen if I were to bring the students I had taught in the U.S. and my current Singaporean students together. If united, how would teenagers from the different nations view each other’s learned patterns and behaviors? Would students I taught in the U.S., who had never been to Singapore and only knew it through its media portrayal as “the country where you can’t chew gum,” make attempts to uncover their similarities and differences to the Singaporean students? Would a personal encounter counteract some of the assumptions encouraged via the media?

My experiences in Singapore inspired more questions than answers, many of which I have spent the past three years in graduate school trying to answer, and many that I continue to raise in this thesis document. With these questions lingering, I left Singapore and returned to the U.S. a more independent individual with a stronger

intercultural competency after navigating new cultural dimensions on a daily basis. I also left knowing that my cultural exploration was just beginning.

### **EPISODE THREE: *HITLER'S DAUGHTER***

In January 2011, I attended the International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY) Showcase in Tampa, Florida. There I experienced nineteen performances from around the world in a Showcase traditionally intended for North American presenters who select performances to present at their venues around the country. Thus, the conversation between performances tends to focus on how suitable the productions are perceived to be for North American young audiences.

Upon surveying the list of performances selected for Showcase, I was surprised to see Australian company Monkey Baa presenting a play called *Hitler's Daughter*, based on an Australian novel by Jackie French's and adapted by Eva di Cesare, Sandra Eldridge, and Tim McGarry. At the time, I knew nothing about the play, but was taken aback by this ostensibly nonsensical cultural fusion. As a Jewish American with familial ties to the Holocaust, one question resonated in my mind: Why is an Australian company presenting a play about Hitler? The Holocaust isn't Australian, so why are they telling this story?

During the play, in which Australian children reenact a story about Hitler's daughter Heidi, leaving the audience to wonder whether or not she really existed, my question was answered: the Holocaust is not American either. My cultural ownership over this historic period stems from my Jewish culture more than my U.S. American culture. For the first time in my adult life, I intentionally separated these identities. While Jews and others facing persecution by the Nazis fled to the U.S. for safety, they also fled

to Australia and other places around the world; their experiences have become a part of many countries' history.

I find it surprising that, as an educated, internationally and culturally aware adult, this play's context baffled me so. Yet the experience only reinforced the power of international TYA to shed new light on my own lived experiences and cultural assumptions. As a child, I read a myriad of Holocaust books, where U.S. American, German, and Israeli children battled various demons to live through, or try to make sense of the Holocaust's atrocities. Never once did I read a book about an Australian child grappling with this part of our shared history. Like in Hong Kong and Singapore, I began to wonder how U.S. American audiences might view this play. Does it matter to them that it is an Australian perspective? Are they baffled by the apparent culture-clash as I was initially? Do they empathize with Heidi or the children telling the story; and if so, does that expand and challenge their notions of personal cultural identity and stories that are spread around the world?

This thesis is an exploration of the questions posed in these three episodes, eliciting many more questions along the way. In the following chapters, I will provide an overview of the history and globalization of TYA in the U.S. I will then provide a framework for considering the goals of international TYA within U.S. American cultural dimensions, and their subsequent intersections. Finally, tracing the parallel paths of the globalization of TYA and the growing demand for international education, I will present an argument for the potential of international TYA to promote the development of a global consciousness amongst U.S. American young audiences.

## **Chapter 1: The Globalization of Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States**

*“It is not enough to be satisfied with our own homely efforts.  
We must find a way to enlist the artists of the world in our cause.  
Then we shall have great theatre for our children.”*  
-Winifred Ward<sup>1</sup>

### **THE DEVELOPMENT OF TYA IN THE UNITED STATES**

To fully understand the potential of international TYA in the United States, we must first examine its past to explore how U.S. TYA theatres were opened to the world. In many ways, U.S. American TYA began as an international entity. The first children's theatres in the early 1900's catered mainly to international immigrant populations, with a dual intention to entertain and assimilate the audience.

In 1903, Alice Minnie Herts founded the Children's Educational Theatre in New York City. Herts' English-language productions, including *Snow White* and *The Little Princess*, featured strong production values and upheld Herts' mission to be enjoyed by both children and adults. The productions' casts were comprised of children and adults from the surrounding community, including many recently arrived immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe. With their multinational ensembles and audiences, the plays provided not only an entertaining escape from harsh working conditions, but also proved an effective means of education. In an historical account of TYA in the U.S., Jed Davis and Mary Jane Evans identify the theatre's positive impact on immigrant transitions: “[Herts was] intent on making [the Children's Educational Theatre] into a vital community force that will help ease the transition into American life, and interest youngsters in better examples of English drama than are found at the corner Nickelodeon

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<sup>1</sup> *Theatre for Children*, 69-70

or at the Vaudeville down the street.” Herts’ productions were so successful that when she premiered Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, local bookstores quickly sold out of the script as members of the community were so eager to read and become familiar with the play before seeing it (3).

Through Herts’ productions, it is believed that the cast and audience members learned how to assimilate to life in New York. However, as the play titles and assimilation goals suggest, these early instances of children’s theatre in the U.S. promoted life as it ought to be, not life as it was for the target audience. The cultural values demonstrated onstage, including gesture, social interaction, and language pronunciations and cadences, promoted behaviors of the upper class, while the audience was comprised of working class immigrants. While the plays sought to unite these diverse immigrants with a shared U.S. American experience and identity, they also intrinsically minimized individual cultural expressions. In choosing these stories, did Herts address their cultural and political origins? Did the cast and audience critically analyze their representation of gender and culture? Did they address the tensions within and between the immigrant cultures, and their own relationships to and interpretations with the stories? Ultimately, the research does not indicate Herts’ process in such depth. Yet TYA’s institutional tendency to promote privileged values and lifestyles continues to this day. In order to effectively move forward as a field, we need to ask these challenging questions from the beginning and critically examine our past to become culturally sensitive, ethical practitioners and artists.

Despite these problematic tendencies, the Children’s Educational Theatre greatly impacted New York City’s immigrant community through the celebration of theatre. At the same time, settlement houses around the country, as hubs of recreation in densely populated urban areas, also realized the potential of theatre to unite their communities.

Jane Addams, founder of Chicago's Hull House settlement, describes the excitement with which youth anticipated seeing plays every Sunday, and the necessity of this cultural force in their personal development:

Long before the five-cent theatre was even heard of, we had accumulated enough testimony as to the power of the drama, and we would have been dull indeed if we had not availed ourselves of the use of the play at Hull-House, not only as an agent of recreation and education, but as a vehicle of self-expression for the teeming young life all about U.S. (84).

The Hull House's productions provided a place for youth to convene and explore their developing U.S. American identities while still expressing their individual cultural traditions. Unlike the homogeneous offerings of the Children's Educational Theatre, the Hull House's stage reflected Chicago's diverse immigrant population. Greek immigrants presented Greek dramas including works by Sophocles; Russian and Polish could often be heard onstage as immigrants dramatized salient moments in their country's past; Italian immigrants used the platform to express the challenges of assimilation, and prejudices faced in their daily lives. Of course, this cultural convergence also proved challenging, as fights often broke out between immigrants of different national origins. Recognizing such struggles, theatre critic Todd London describes Hull House's stage as a space where, unlike Herts' theatre, immigrants could sort through their conflicts. Addressing Hull House's impact on the culturally rich U.S. American theatre to come, London affirms:

Hull-House was a contradiction of identification and assimilation, as the transplanted played out the stories of their national identities *and* began to steep into the American melting pot. As history, it still stands there, reminding U.S. that ethnic, racial and cultural diversity was an originating premise of our theatre, not a late-century concept applied after the fact (80).

Another Midwestern settlement with a prominent theatre was the Karamu House in Cleveland, Ohio, founded by Russell and Rowena Jelliffe in 1915. Recognizing their prominence in a multicultural neighborhood, the Jelliffes emphasized stories representing diverse perspectives: “No matter the background or life experiences of the children, the stories united the group, and all involved learned to respect one another’s views” (Abookire and McNair 71). Their determination to be inclusive of cultures is further apparent in their progressive casting, akin to color and gender-blind practices: “Rowena...believed that each show should be cast according to who was best for the role, no matter the sex or race of the child” (Abookire and McNair 72). Winifred Ward acknowledges the strength of Karamu’s multicultural programming and its development into a fully-fledged children’s theatre in the 1950’s. She describes their promotion of “interracial cooperation” and their progressive distinction as “the most famous Negro Arts Center in the world” (46).

The Hull House and Karamu laid the foundation for what would become our modern TYA landscape in demonstrating the need for children’s theatre as an integral force in engaging and uniting U.S. American communities. As illustrated in the next chapter, a foundational tenant to global education is first understanding personal cultural and national identities; in promoting a shared U.S. American cultural and artistic identity enhanced by personal identities, the Hull House and Karamu did just that. The Hull House allowed immigrant populations to try-on their past and present, creating new and personal intercultural identities; Karamu House promoted the intercultural exploration of cultural groups coming together to create new art and to explore shared identities. Each settlement gave youth an artistic outlet, a place for excitement and recreation, and illustrated theatre’s contributions to cultural development.



Around the same time, a national service organization began to explore the potential of children's theatre to promote personal expression and cultural development. As early as 1912, members of the Association of Junior Leagues of America (AJLA) presented simple plays and drama classes as part of their community outreach endeavors. Like Herts, members of the AJLA "quickly recognized the value of drama classes in helping young people learn the language and the customs of their new land" (Bedard 1989, 36). The AJLA's plays became a favorite activity among its members and audiences, and soon their productions began to grow in scope and artistic merit. Starting with small independent projects, they soon developed full seasons of children's theatre with formal scripts, extensive sets and costumes, and a commitment to creating excellent art. AJLA branches around the U.S. wrote their own plays, based primarily on folk and fairy tales, and as the demand for new plays increased, the regional branches began to share scripts. In 1928, the League created the AJLA Play Bureau to publish and distribute scripts, and to facilitate the exchange of production information and ideas between League theatres across the country (Bedard 1989, 38).

In 1932, keen to increase access to children's theatre in Charleston, South Carolina, Sara Spencer joined the Charleston Junior League. Spencer quickly became a major force in their productions, directing three plays in her first year before being appointed director of the new Charleston Children's Theatre. Committed to expanding the theatre's offerings, Spencer traveled the country, advocating for children's theatre in the AJLA, and building relationships with playwrights such as Charlotte B. Chorpenning. The more playwrights and plays Spencer encountered, the more aware she became of the need for a central publication site to share and distribute the scripts. Unfortunately, the existing play publishing houses were unwilling to take the financial risk of publishing scripts for young audiences, especially in the midst of a depression. Hence, in 1935,

Spencer established The Children's Theatre Press, devoted exclusively to publishing plays for young audiences, including those from the League, and from the playwrights Spencer had recently met. The press' founding reinforced the growing national effort to pursue and promote excellence in children's theatre. The central location of the press allowed for script exchange throughout the country, thus establishing the beginnings of a national network for children's theatre (Krzys 138-41).

In 1944, another advancement was made in the development of children's theatre in the U.S. Winifred Ward, a teacher and director in Evanston, Illinois, hosted the first Children's Theatre Conference (CTC) of the American Educational Theatre Association (AETA) at Northwestern University. There, Ward came together with Spencer and other prominent practitioners in the growing field to create a community for children's theatre practitioners (Combs 125-7). In the 1958 edition of Ward's book, *Theatre for Children*, she presents the CTC's mission as "a time when workers gather to exchange ideas, to learn new technical skills, to see demonstrations of formal and informal drama, and to hear acknowledged authorities on child psychology, sociology, and education" (65). The tradition of an annual conference for practitioners to gather in an exchange of ideas and celebration of the field continues today. After a series of organizational name changes reflecting an evolving mission, the CTC is now the American Alliance for Theatre and Education's (AATE), sponsor of a national summer conference and regional mini-conferences throughout the year.

Ward's impact on the development of TYA goes much deeper than that of a conference organizer. A respected scholar and director, she promoted the artistic integrity of theatre for young audiences. She insisted that children's theatre be *great* theatre that highly regards its audience:

Artistic merit, an objective of most children's theatres, is to be attained only by considering the audience of supreme importance. Respect for the children who will see the performances, and a deep interest in presenting good plays, skilled players, and beautifully complete productions, should supersede all other considerations (219).

In focusing on the final outcome of children's theatre, Ward clearly distinguished professional theatre from educational theatre. In addition to artistic excellence, she insisted that "no person is cast in a play solely because the experience will be good for him" (219). Growing from the artistic beginnings of Herts' Children's Educational Theatre and the settlement houses, Ward's artistic outlook was a major departure from the many community-service and process driven children's theatres around the country.

As children's theatres and the Children's Theatre Press grew increasingly successful, with a continual dialogue supported by the CTC, the landscape of contemporary TYA in the U.S. began to take shape. Like Ward, Spencer was determined to turn children's theatre into its own thriving artistic discipline. Spencer published plays by such prolific and artistic playwrights as Chorpenning and Aurand Harris, whose scripts respected and inspired young audiences.

Spencer achieved such acclaim with her press and advocacy for the field that she began to represent children's theatre in other contexts, including at 1950's Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. The next year, she traveled to England to learn about the English practices in children's theatre, in order to bring new ideas back to the U.S. In a speech delivered to the CTC in December 1951, Spencer reflected on her trip. Among her discoveries was that England, like the U.S., was experiencing great success in amateur theatre, while struggling in their professional children's theatre endeavors. To help this burgeoning professional field, she was asked to expand the Children's Theatre Press to England. Recognizing the values of such an international exchange, Spencer alluded to the intercultural developments yet to come: "I urge all of

you who plan a trip abroad to make a special effort to meet our English-speaking colleagues, as there is much to gain by sharing our philosophies...we have much to learn from each other” (333-4). While Spencer’s encouragement of cross-cultural exploration was remarkable at the time, a contemporary perspective reveals her unintentionally limited perspective. In encouraging collaboration with “English-speaking colleagues,” Spencer failed to acknowledge other colleagues from non-English speaking countries and potential opportunities for broader international collaboration.

Ward also recognized the potential of such partnerships to promote international exchange in TYA and entertained a more global perspective than Spencer. Ward believed looking abroad to countries as varied as Japan, Indonesia, and Greece would lead to new stories and artistic possibilities for U.S. TYA (8-12). In *Theatre for Children* she promotes such exploration, insisting, “it is not enough to be satisfied with our own homely efforts. We must find a way to enlist the artists of the world in our cause. Then we shall have great theatre for our children” (69-70).

Spencer continued to move into the forefront of the burgeoning international TYA scene. Her trip to England and subsequently to an international meeting in Paris positioned her as an international representative for the U.S. As Director of CTC from 1953-1955, Spencer created a partnership with the International Theatre Institute (ITI) to make additional contacts abroad, which TYA archivist Katherine Krzys identifies as one of Spencer’s greatest contributions to CTC (148).

In 1963, Spencer was invited to represent the U.S. as the British Children’s Theatre Association initiated a formal convergence of international children’s theatres. Spencer collaborated with new CTC president Jed Davis to appoint a U.S. delegation which traveled to Paris to create the initial constitution for what would soon become ASSITEJ – the *Association Internationale de Theatre pour l’Enfance et pour la Jeunesse*

– the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People. Spencer was appointed as the English secretary of the ASSITEJ Executive Committee, and in 1964, she traveled to Venice for the committee’s first meeting (Krzys 150-1).

In Venice, Spencer learned of the great professionalism sweeping across children’s theatre in Europe’s developed countries. Children’s theatre in the U.S. was still largely amateur, and to encourage professional productions she began to collect and publish international scripts she deemed appropriate for professional productions in the U.S. In 1966, reflecting such developments, Spencer changed the name of the press to Anchorage Press, The International Agency of Plays for Young People (Krzys 153).

Among the international publications was *Reynard the Fox* by French playwright Arthur Fauquez. Krzys cites Spencer’s reaction to this “bold, risky” play, as “the first time anyone ever thought of a play for children whose hero was a rogue, who lied onstage” (152). After decades of U.S. scripts promoting upper-class and upper-middle class values and behaviors, *Reynard the Fox* garnered attention for challenging young audiences. Spencer attributes mature American plays, including Harris’ *Androcles and the Lion* and Joanna Kraus’ *The Ice Wolf*, as having “‘arisen, by natural processes, from the minds of authors who are looking at the children’s world with a new kind of critical honesty, and using the theatre to prepare children for hard truth’” (Krzys 153). While professional TYA in the U.S. still largely avoids taboo subjects such as sexuality, violence, and death, it can be argued that our forward steps in critical inquiry and mature themes may not have been possible without *Reynard*’s breaking the mold. As professional TYA continued to mature in the U.S., so too did our connectivity overseas; with the success of ASSITEJ and other international initiatives, the next half-century would catapult U.S. American TYA into the global era.

## **ASSITEJ: THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THEATRE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The first ASSITEJ World Congress was held in 1966 in Prague, Czechoslovakia, now Czech Republic. The Congress united representatives from around the world for cultural exchange and to experience and discuss international performances. The ASSITEJ Executive Committee, the organization's governing body, met with international delegates to assess and improve the new association. While ninety-nine individuals from twenty-nine countries attended the Congress, only seventeen of those countries were officially recognized as ASSITEJ National Centers, a status that allowed them voting delegates. The U.S. was one such country. To create a national center, a country had to be recognized by the United Nations, and then meet other criteria. Membership was intentionally limited to countries and not individuals or organizations, to maintain consistency with Cold War politics. Then the ASSITEJ Executive Committee, comprised primarily of white European men (with Spencer a notable exception), decided if membership would be granted (Eek, et. al, Vol. 1, 56-9). While ASSITEJ sought to unite TYA practitioners internationally, it did so selectively. From its inception, a Euro-centric agenda dominated the organization's undertakings.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, ASSITEJ's narrow and limited scope gained recognition as its members sought to expand the primarily North American and European representation to include an even greater global perspective (Regan 3). The unique artistry and offerings of disparate cultures around the world could no longer be ignored, as Tanzanian Penina O. Mlama asserts, "...if an analysis of the theatre culture of India, Japan, Nicaragua or any other part of the world was done, each culture would provide its own unique characteristics which shape the content and character of its adult and children's theatre" (77). Others echoed Mlama's sentiment, recognizing the

interconnectedness of the increasingly global world (a tenant of international education addressed in the next chapter). Thus marked a new chapter for ASSITEJ: in addition to sharing international art forms, the organization began to promote intercultural artistic fusions and international advocacy of TYA. While the scope of membership was still influenced by Cold War structures, progress had begun as members increasingly recognized the gaps in global representation.

In 2001, ASSITEJ founded the World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People in an effort to continue promoting children's theatre globally, including the under-represented geographies identified by Mluma. Every March 20, ASSITEJ national centers and theatres recognize this day with special performances and events, increasing TYA's profile and attention and advocating for increased access to theatre by all children worldwide.

Another recent development of ASSITEJ is that the organization now sponsors intercultural projects, where international artists unite to explore their unique cultural identities, and their situation within the shared global community. The 2008 Congress in Adelaide, Australia, marked the beginning of a three-year project joining twenty-three early and mid-career TYA artists from seventeen countries: the Next Generation Project. From 2008-2011, the participants, including U.S. American Roxanne Schroeder-Arce, convened at a series of forums and festivals to engage in dialogue and workshops interrogating the current and future scope of international TYA. In an address to the 2011 ASSITEJ World Congress, members of the Next Generation Project reported the creation of at least seventeen new artistic and educational collaborations over the project's three-year span.

While the Next Generation Project is now complete, the 2011 Congress launched the Next Generation Programme. Rather than connecting individuals to a selective

network, as did the 2008 Next Generation, the new program reflects current global trends of individualization through social media and personal design. The current Next Generation Programme connects young TYA artists to mentors and collaborators around the world, including directors, writers, and production companies. In doing so, ASSITEJ intends to promote “international exchange and collaboration” between these artists and their respective national centers and/or networks (ASSITEJ website).

This commitment to international exchange was at the core of the seventeenth, and most recent World Congress. In 2011, hundreds of delegates from around the world came together in both Copenhagen, Denmark, and Malmö, Sweden, for a Congress themed “Building Bridges, Crossing Borders.” At this Congress, attendees traveled between two countries to see performances, attend workshops, and network with international colleagues. The international setting for a World Congress demonstrates ASSITEJ’s commitment to creating international partnerships, as two countries united to host a Congress of a capacity which one country alone could not achieve. (ASSITEJ website).

Reflecting the challenges of globalization, ASSITEJ’s Executive Committee recognized the narrow scope of its membership criteria. Considering the limitations of national center membership, U.S. American and ASSITEJ Vice-President Kim Peter Kovac notes that “any individual or theatre could only participate through its national center...the end result was that if you were from a country without a national center, you were out of luck” (20). The Executive Committee proposed, and the official voting delegates of the national centers agreed, that this criteria alone was no longer sufficient for the expanding needs of the global TYA community. So, at the 2011 Congress, ASSITEJ’s constitution was updated to reflect two new opportunities for membership. First, networks that unite people based on a particular interest can now be members akin



to countries. As Kovac explains, “any international network with members in at least seven countries...can apply to be a full voting member of ASSITEJ. If the application [meets] the criteria and [is] approved by the [Executive Committee], the network [will] have the same status as, say, Mexico or Denmark, or any other country” (22). The second membership amendment reflects that individuals – either persons or theatres – can now be non-voting members, regardless of national or network affiliation.

This change means that individuals anywhere in the world, whether or not represented by one of the eighty-one ASSITEJ centers, can benefit from membership of the organization’s international network. Currently, the two networks approved for membership are the *International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network* (ITYARN), and *write local play global* (WLPG) – the playwright’s network. These constitutional amendments reflect ASSITEJ’s expanding perspectives to acknowledge the changing global demands of international TYA in globalization.

With increasingly global internet connectivity and increasingly affordable travel opportunities, individuals no longer need their countries to establish global connection; they can create them themselves. In fact, it is through WLPG that I recently connected with Jeton Neziraj, a Kosovar playwright, and subsequently produced one of his plays with U.S. American high school students. As the U.N. does not recognize Kosovo, it cannot host an ASSITEJ national center. The 2011 membership amendments mean that Neziraj, a member of WLPG and its Playwrights Advisory Committee, is now officially affiliated with ASSITEJ.

What does all this mean for TYA in the U.S.? F. Scott Regan attributes many successes of the U.S. American TYA community to its association with ASSITEJ: an increase in the quality and quantity of professional productions featuring professionally trained actors, increased governmental funding and support to children’s theatres, and a

more earnest commitment to expanding the field. Certainly many U.S. socio-political factors influenced these developments as well, but ASSITEJ's influence cannot be ignored, as Regan considers non-congressional events: "ASSITEJ gatherings in Albany, New Orleans, and Honolulu as well as in Europe, have allowed more Americans to see the work of other nations and help create an image in America of children's theatre as a serious art form" (6). While the U.S. is now a major producer of TYA productions, artists, and scholars, it is interesting to note that U.S. American professional TYA plays rarely tour internationally. While there are many reasons for the U.S.'s limited TYA touring, including rules of the actor unions, I wonder if continued developments during the 21<sup>st</sup> century will allow the world to experience U.S. American TYA, as the U.S. experiences TYA from much of the world?

Perhaps TYA/USA will contribute to such global expansion. TYA/USA, the U.S. national center of ASSITEJ, currently boasts nearly 100 member professional and educational theatres, hundreds of independent members, and a mission "to promote the power of professional theatre for young audiences through excellence, collaboration and innovation across cultural and international boundaries" (TYA/USA website). As a member of TYA/USA, I am connected to artists around the country as well as the international ASSITEJ community. Through TYA/USA's conferences, publications and online forums, augmented by social media tools including Facebook and Skype, I am instantly connected to my national and international colleagues in TYA, engaging in an ongoing dialogue of personal, national, international, and intercultural projects. With national centers and networks as the connecting fabric, the future development of U.S. American and international TYA is now in the hands of the individual practitioners, as demonstrated by the committed members of the Next Generation Project.

## **INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS FOR YOUTH**

ASSITEJ continues to connect the U.S. with the world, inspiring international TYA and intercultural collaborations. Meanwhile, the International Performing Arts for Youth (IPAY) organization brings the world to the U.S. through uniting international artists, presenters, promoters, and producers. In 1978, when the Children's Theatre Conference was known as the Children's Theatre Association of America (now AATE), members of the Sponsors and Presenters Committee hosted a showcase featuring professional productions available for tour: The International Showcase of Performing Arts for Young People. The well-attended and hugely successful showcase became an annual event, and in 1994 it became an independent organization (Showcase History).

Now known as IPAY, organization's hallmark event for is the annual North American Showcase, where juried international performances, including music, dance, and performance art, in addition to TYA, are invited to perform. These performances are selected to showcase some of the best work for youth in the world, and are simultaneously promoted with the intention that producers will select them as a part of their season. As such, a performance from Brazil may be selected for IPAY, subsequently booked to perform throughout North America, and experienced by thousands of U.S. American and Canadian children.

Building on the strength of the Showcase, IPAY continues to expand its educational and artistic offerings. In addition to performances, Showcase now includes professional development forums to facilitate networking and expanding the field. Additionally, education is increasing its presence as evidenced by the Jim Rye Scholarship awarded to students to attend and intern at Showcase, who are encouraged to engage with artists and presenters, contributing to critical dialogues about the performances and the field. In 2012, The University of Texas at Austin – Department of

Theatre and Dance partnered with other Austin theatres to organize and host the Showcase, marking the first time a university contributed in such a prime manner; it is hoped that this model will continue, and academic institutions will continue to support and co-sponsor Showcase.

IPAY's mission reflects such endeavors, with the intent "to create professional and educational opportunities supporting meaningful performing arts experiences for young audiences in North America," emphasizing "artistic excellence and innovation...the intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic growth and development of our audiences...participation, collaboration, and partnership among the professional (global) community [and] investment in performing arts for young audiences" (IPAY website).

The performances booked through IPAY typically perform at performing arts centers and international festivals throughout the U.S. and Canada. These international productions are not intended to replace the regional TYA companies or producing houses endorsed by Ward and Spencer, but as a separate cultural offering. In fact, many presenters in the U.S., such as the late Colleen Porter of Cleveland's PlayhouseSquare, recognize presenting houses' unique opportunities to provide diverse experiences for young audiences: "If a producing house is known for a particular style of work, they may not have the opportunity to produce something different" (Iley-Spear 27). Additionally, presenting houses create opportunities for youth to experience performances in geographic areas where producing houses do not exist, or lack the infrastructure to create strong artistic productions.

Presenters also acknowledge the importance of introducing young audiences to international performances. Susan Crofton, formerly of Madison, Wisconsin's Overture Center, says, "If you have a piece from Holland, Scotland, and Canada in your season, each with a different cultural spin and each using a different way to develop their work,

it's a great thing to bring into your community.” Mary Rose Lloyd, of The New Victory Theatre in New York City, agrees and takes this responsibility a step further, identifying that an internationally diverse season allows young audiences to learn about the cultures around world; opportunities that might not exist elsewhere in a city (Iley-Spear 25).

With ASSITEJ uniting artists around the world, and IPAY connecting international plays and North American performance venues, international festivals and regional presenting houses including The New Victory Theatre continue to expand their offerings and influence the field. TYA is well on its way to becoming a truly global entity. As the field continues to recognize its inherent limitations and attempts to increase access to TYA for *all* children worldwide, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is positioned to see as many developments as the 20<sup>th</sup>.

As I look toward the future of international TYA, I reflect upon the privileges international TYA has afforded me, including connecting with inspiring colleagues, access to phenomenal art, extensive travel, and the personal discoveries made along the way. This reflection also inspires many questions. As the field continues to expand, what are the values in exposing young audiences to international work? What are the specific benefits of introducing youth to diverse cultures, as Lloyd and Crofton advocate? What are the potential benefits of international TYA to young audiences' developing identities and global consciousness? These questions guide my research as I examine international education in the U.S. in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Developing the Global Consciousness through International Education**

*“Learning should be inspired by the goal of developing global consciousness –  
a mindful way of being in the world today.”*

-Veronica Boix Mansilla and Howard Gardner<sup>2</sup>

### **GLOBALIZATION AND THE GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Parallel to the developments of U.S. and global TYA, the 20<sup>th</sup> century also marked vast expansions in globalization. A worldwide phenomenon, globalization hosts a myriad of components. Recognizing its inherent complexities, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco defines globalization as the convergence of international social, cultural, and economic processes “that make the old boundaries, as well as the aspired cultural coherence and homogeneity of the nation-state, increasingly untenable” (7). In this manner, globalization increases access to, and interdependence of, people and systems around the world, with a lesser emphasis on the country of origin and a greater emphasis on the global structure.

Globalization’s impact on education in the U.S. and the need for students to develop a global consciousness are the foci of this chapter. International education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century moves beyond a study of world history and languages, seeking to interrogate the *hows* and *whys* of nations and cultures around the world. The following theoretical interrogation will reveal some of the factors for ASSITEJ and IPAY’s widespread growth and relevance, while laying the foundation for an examination of the impacts of international TYA, TYA from countries other than the U.S., on U.S. American youth in the next chapter.

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<sup>2</sup> *From Teaching Globalization to Nurturing Global Consciousness*, 47

First, a closer look at the evolution of globalization. The 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the development of commercial air travel, connecting people and goods faster and cheaper than ever before. Telephone, cellular, and internet technologies which first connected households, are now literally in the palms of individuals' hands in developed countries and urban areas of developing countries. The development of international organizations including the United Nations, the World Bank, and UNESCO provide platforms for countries to promote individual, national, and global needs and concerns, while uniting to find solutions to common problems ranging from access to food and healthcare, to global warming (Friedman 5-12).

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked growth, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a radical growth spurt, largely attributed to what Thomas L. Friedman terms the *flattening* of the world. Due to the instantaneous and prolific global connectivity of computers and the internet, geographic distance and barriers no longer provide the challenges they once did for international collaboration.

The flat-world platform is the product of a convergence of the personal computer (which allowed every individual suddenly to become the author of his or her own content in digital form) with fiber-optic cable (which suddenly allowed all those individuals to access more and more digital content around the world for next to nothing) with the rise of work flow software (which enabled individuals all over the world to collaborate on that same digital content from anywhere, regardless of the distances between them...As a result, every person now must, and can, ask: Where do *I* as an individual fit into the global competition and opportunities of the day, and how can *I*, on my own, collaborate with others globally? (11)

What Friedman alludes to, in this global collaboration, is the contemporary need and ability to work with others around the world to be successful and competitive in a global market. Diplomats who used to travel for two days to meet in person can now Skype from anywhere in the world, replicating face-to-face contact. Computers with components made in Malaysia, China, and the United Arab Emirates, can be assembled

in Japan and shipped overnight to the U.S., set up in a suburban living room before breakfast the next day. Individuals calling to book airline tickets might as easily speak to a customer service representative in New Delhi as New York – the former proving advantageous for the airline due to lower wages and a large market of employees eager to engage in such a global career.

It is this flattening that also allows international TYA to prosper. Production companies can invest the time and money in traveling to IPAY Showcases, while maintaining connections to work and tours back home – or anywhere else in the world for that matter. Anyone with an internet connection can see pictures and videos of hundreds of plays around the world with the click of a button. An English-language Australian play can have its world premier as a Spanish-language production in Argentina, with the director and playwright maintaining constant communication about nuances of language and culture. Such was the case when Argentinian Solange Perazzo directed the first production of Australian Finegan Kruckemeyer’s play *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing* in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 2011. Perazzo and Kruckemeyer were both members of ASSITEJ’s Next Generation, and this play was one of the seventeen intercultural collaborations resulting from the project.

To excel at the intra and inter-cultural communication that Friedman’s flat world requires, individuals such as Perazzo and Kruckemeyer must develop a global consciousness. Veronica Biox Mansilla and Howard Gardner define *global consciousness* as a movement beyond just knowing about people, things, and ideas in different parts of the world, but encompassing “a mindful way of *being* in the world today” (48). This means that individuals must understand and apply their knowledge about other countries and cultures, asking questions and reflecting on their surroundings. Rather than simply dismissing, judging, or making assumptions about different cultures



or ways-of-being, a global consciousness requires a constantly expanding individual perception of the world within the individual's frame of reference – making space for new ideas to become a part of the lived experience, the individual “matrix” of personal and worldly events (Mansilla and Gardner 58).

My own global consciousness was greatly expanded by my travels, particularly living in Singapore. As a teacher to Singaporean students, I struggled to accept their bows, a cultural greeting towards teachers. If I had verbalized my struggle, for instance by asking students not to bow, I would not be operating from a global consciousness. Foreign to my cultural upbringing, this gesture and its implicit teacher superiority over students made me feel rather uncomfortable, as I operate from a constructivist pedagogy, wherein teacher and students share learning responsibilities. After learning how to travel on Semester at Sea and extensively studying Singaporean culture prior to arrival, my global consciousness informed me how to respond to such an unfamiliar situation. As a guest, I recognized that denying this gesture would effectively deny my students' cultural expression and learned socialization patterns. In acknowledging this greeting, I again activated my global consciousness to accept their cultural patterns, finding a place of mutually understood behavior to allow for our dramatic exploration – which was, after all, the intention of our time together. In this context, I also exhibited Mansilla and Gardner's three essential tenants of global consciousness:

*Global sensitivity*, or our awareness of local experience as a manifestation of broader developments in the planet; *global understanding*, or our capacity to think in flexible and informed ways about contemporary worldwide developments; and *global self*, or a perception of ourselves as global actors, a sense of planetary belongings and membership in humanity that guides our actions and prompts our civic commitments (59).

I exhibited *global sensitivity* in acknowledging and accepting the bow as a cultural gesture; *global understanding* in recognizing the validity and importance of this gesture

in my host culture; and *global self* in acknowledging my role as a teacher in this culture, and the value of maintaining the ethos of the hallway and subsequently the drama classroom.

I acknowledge my interchangeable use of *nation* and *culture* in this document. While such a confluence of terms is problematic, I do so in accordance with international and social theorists, whose analyses examine dominant trends and majority populations; I also attempt to acknowledge the multiple cultures within a country when possible. Additionally, I recognize that, due to the socializing of schools and the media, youth of diverse cultures often share national cultural traits, as observed in Singapore and as evidenced in the U.S. education system examined here. For example, in multicultural Singapore, I engaged with many people exhibiting strong ties to both their ethnic and national identities. Similarly, I associate with both my Jewish and U.S. American identities. In recognizing that cultural and national identities are not always linked, I also recognize that individuals of varying cultures can and frequently do exhibit characteristics aligned with their national identity, as evidenced by the similar behaviors of my Singaporean students of different ethnicities.

Across cultural and national identities, the question remains: even in a flat world, why is such a global consciousness necessary for youth in the U.S. if not everyone will be a teacher or business executive abroad? The multi-layered answer lies in the understanding that U.S. American citizens are now becoming global citizens, and education practices need to reflect such. “At the same time that children are taught to become citizens in particular nation-states, they also need to understand that the world in which they live extends beyond their own nation and their specific national identity” (Gutek 20). Just as U.S. American history and cultural traditions are taught from the

earliest years, for children to develop an understanding and pride as a U.S. citizen, so too must they develop an understanding and a pride as a global citizen.

Citing the effects of living in a flat world, Patel, *et. al.* insist we now live in a global community, wherein “people of national and international origin...form a community within and outside of a physical space and...subscribe to a diverse range of norms and values that inform their visions and perspectives about the world around them” (5-6). In other words, communities no longer demand that individuals be in the same physical space or share a specific set of values. The global community is inclusive of people from all nations, cultures, languages, identities, and interests, and draws upon such diversity to unite them as global citizens.

There are many definitions and opinions regarding what should comprise an international education for citizens of the global community. Clearly it is unrealistic for students to learn about *every* country’s history, languages, and unique cultural traditions in school. While these attributes may be a part of an international education, with a particular emphasis on the countries and cultures in close proximity (geographically or otherwise), these traditionally studied global components are not the hallmarks of an international education. Rather, Patel advocates for international education curricula that include the study of systems, global issues and challenges, society and culture, understanding what makes for a shared human experience, power and oppression, current events, and their relation to world history, such as I studied before living in Singapore. Synthesizing these components, Patel proposes that the following six interconnected goals compose a holistic international education. These goals are also essential to the analysis of international TYA:

1. Understanding of global interrelatedness and interdependence,
2. respecting cultural diversity,

3. fighting racial discrimination,
4. protecting the global environment,
5. understanding human rights, and
6. accepting basic social values (78-9).

In addition to scholarly citations, Patel's goals are reflected in the missions of premier organizations promoting and developing international education in the U.S. The International Institute for Education (IIE), for instance, which sponsors international exchange programs including Fulbright grants, summarizes its mission as follows: "Educational, cultural and professional opportunities transcend borders to foster a peaceful and interconnected world where all people achieve their full potential; think and act as global citizens; and build inclusive, thriving communities" (IIE website). Similarly, the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) promotes international education for its success at "establishing mutual understanding among nations, preparing the next generation with vital cross-cultural and global skills, and creating the conditions for a more peaceful world" (NAFSA website).

ASSITEJ, too, recently began to recognize the importance of such educational goals through theatre, with particular attention to respecting diversity, minimizing discrimination, and recognizing human rights and social values. These values are clearly seen in the Preamble to the 2011 ASSITEJ Constitution (*italics added for emphasis of intersecting values*):

Theatre respects its young audiences by presenting their hopes, dreams, and fears; it develops and deepens experience, intelligence, emotion, and imagination; it inspires *ethical choices*; it increases awareness of *social relationships*; it encourages self-esteem, *tolerance*, confidence, and the *free expression of opinions*. Above all, it helps future generations find *their place and voice in society* (ASSITEJ website).

ASSITEJ and international education organizations aim to create cross-cultural and international awareness through the promotion and development of skills, such as

“imagination” above. While such goals are the ideal, and not necessarily observed in theatre nor education, they continue to inform ever-changing practices of artists and educators.

Indeed, these goals also align with another tenant of contemporary education: 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, currently celebrated by school districts and taught to pre-service teachers, emphasize student development in 1) life and career skills, 2) learning and innovation skills – critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, and 3) information media and technology skills, through a comprehensive education in core subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes. Rather than a focus on testing, these skills are assessed via student outcomes and their ability to apply their knowledge in, for instance, a critical or creative manner. Among the 21<sup>st</sup> century themes intended to be incorporated into the core subject areas (including English, languages, and science), is the theme of global awareness, where we again see similarities to Patel and ASSITEJ’s goals.

The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills website promotes global awareness with the explicit intentions for students to “understand and address global issues...[to work] collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue,” and “[to understand] other nations and cultures.” These skills posit *global awareness* as essentially another way of stating *global consciousness*, through developing a way of being in the interconnected, diverse, world rather than just knowing.

## **THE SIX GOALS OF AN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

The repetition of Patel's goals in academic, non-profit, artistic, and educational settings reveals their necessary inclusion in a holistic education, preparing students for success as global citizens. To understand the relevance of these international educational outcomes to youth in the U.S.A., I will examine each goal more closely.

### **1. Understanding of Global Interrelatedness and Interdependence.**

In Friedman's flat world, we have access to seemingly anyone, anywhere, anytime. While telecommunications are limited to privileged and often urban populations, this flatness extends beyond communications and business, facilitating the extreme speed with which events in one part of the world potentially affect people in other parts of the world. Take, for example, the recent bird flu and H1N1 outbreaks, as well as the economic and stock crises, which circumnavigated the globe instantaneously. After the 2004 Southeast Asian Tsunami, international vacationers re-routed their traveling to new destinations, catapulting the now grieving tsunami-struck communities into simultaneous economic disrepair. After the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York's Twin Towers, fears of terrorism, racial profiling, and hate crimes to those appearing to be of Middle-Eastern and Muslim descent spread throughout non-Arab countries including the U.S., Canada, and Australia; the airline industry, specifically United Airlines, lost billions of dollars in global revenue; and the U.S. began to look to oil sources beyond the Middle-East, greatly increasing the cost of gas, and impacting nearly every household in the U.S. (Patel 79-80).

Just as these examples reveal our global interrelatedness, they also demonstrate our interdependence. Many new parents question the relevancy of immunizations for diseases that seem extinct in the U.S., such as Polio. But just as H1N1 spread so rapidly,

so too can outbreaks of Polio and other airborne diseases. The U.S. is dependent on oil from the Middle East, a dependence that provoked chaos when alternate sources had to be sought. Most global economies rely on tourism revenue, and when natural events such as the 2004 tsunami, the 2011 central Texas drought, or the 2012 Colorado wildfires strike, tourism dwindles, taking with it economic stability.

In a weather experiment once conducted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, meteorologist Edward Lorenz observed that tiny variations created drastically different results. This experiment sparked the Butterfly Theory, which has been adapted by scientists and urban legend enthusiasts alike due to its simple question illustrating our global cause and effect: does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a Tornado in Texas? (Lienhard). Or, as relates to global connections, how does one seemingly insignificant occurrence in one part of the world affect something in another part? Students need to understand how they, like Lorenz's butterfly, have the potential to create change in the world. While their actions may not be as provocative as the so-called butterfly's wings, even the simple act of buying a t-shirt in Texas, designed in California, and manufactured in Cambodia from materials made in China, connects individuals to our interdependent global structure. Similarly, a TYA production might use a theatrical light designed and built in another part of the world; the same can be said of fabrics, songs, and a myriad of other production components.

## **2. Respecting Cultural Diversity.**

To examine respecting cultural diversity, let's first examine what exactly cultural diversity entails. There are many cultural differences that we can see, smell, and touch, including national dress, grooming habits, spatial distance between people in public,

foods, and holiday celebrations. Then, there are cultural differences that we can experience, including beliefs, values, identities, and cultural dimensions.

Social scientist Geert Hofstede defines culture as a sort of mental programming that is learned and developed as a product of one's environment; culture entails "patterns of thinking, feeling, and potential acting...learned throughout [an individual's] lifetime" (4). To examine the similarities and differences of the learned patterns implicit to all cultures, Hofstede created a classification system of four cultural dimensions: power distance (briefly mentioned in the Introduction), collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. Each culture comprises a unique blend of these dimensions, and understanding them informs how and why world cultures vary, and how to overcome and respect such cultural diversity (Hofstede 14). As established earlier, cultures vary within and between countries; for the purposes of this analysis and to maintain consistency with Hofstede's theories, cultural traits are aligned with a country's dominant patterns of behavior.

To illustrate the impact of experiencing diverse cultural dimensions, I recall my great degree of culture shock upon moving to Singapore. During my three-day visit during Semester at Sea, I experienced a Singapore that looks and feels much like tropical areas of the U.S. A few days into living there, however, as I began to delve deeper into the culture, I also began to experience a vastly different set of cultural dimensions than I was accustomed to in the U.S. The following examination defines the cultural dimensions, and begins to consider their implications in international TYA.

As mentioned earlier, the power distance index (PDI) measures the distance between those with and without power in a given context and culture, such as teacher to student, municipal official to civilian, and man to woman. As suggested by my encounters in Singapore, understanding these variances can reveal why and how people



operate. Denmark's PDI is more than half that of the U.S.'s (18 to 40, on a scale of 100), meaning there is even less of an authoritative space between those of differing status in Denmark than in the U.S. This corresponds to the reportedly high levels of job satisfaction in Denmark, as individuals have more power and autonomy in relation to their superiors, and are less dependent on their approval. However, it is argued that such a low PDI may prove too lax, promoting risky individual power as illustrated in Denmark's Christiania, a self-governing enclave within Copenhagen that allows free use of drugs and alcohol, where each individual dictates his or her own rights (Christiania.org).

Examining Denmark's PDI helps one to understand their TYA trends. Teatret Gruppe 38 is an internationally recognized award winning Danish TYA company. Upon experiencing their popular production *Hans Christian, You Must be an Angel* in Copenhagen during the 2011 ASSITEJ World Congress, I was surprised to find presumably Danish children as young as 5 years old in the audience with me. The performance visually astounded me, captivated my imagination, and I was certain audiences of all ages would find as much delight as I had, a speculation which was supported by the behavior of the children nearby. However, as a U.S. American, I was surprised to experience so-called TYA taboos: a video of a nude man, and brief moments of terror. The PDI suggests that, just as there is a distance between employer and employee, there is a distance between adult and child. In the U.S., certain aspects of life, such as nudity and fear, are reserved for adult art and media. Whereas in Denmark, the smaller distance between adult and child implies a greater openness to exposing children to more aspects of life earlier on; or perhaps, not hiding them, as everyone, regardless of age, experiences nudity and fear.

Collectivism versus individualism, Hofstede's next factor, refers to how people best operate when making decisions and accomplishing tasks. Collective and individual preferences influence how students learn (in groups or individually), how the workplace functions (independent tasks, collaboration, groups of two or three tight-knit and trusting individuals), family structure (multiple generations living together, offspring living with parents through adulthood, family members living in different cities), and individual willingness to be singled out from his or her peers.

The U.S.A. ranks highest on an individualism index (IDV) of 53 countries and regions, at 91 out of 100. This means that U.S. culture supports the achievements of the individual rather than the group, and that individuals in the U.S. often strive to separate from the crowd. This cultural pattern traces back to the country's foundation on individual liberties and freedoms, and is sustained through continual promotion of the American Dream, wherein anyone can rise from "rags to riches" through hard work and identification as a powerful or skilled individual. Contrast this cultural focus on individual success with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skill of collaboration, and a tension becomes apparent. Desiring the American Dream, many U.S. American parents insist their child is "the best" and condition their children to expect constant praise and superlative reinforcement. Many of these children then face challenges collaborating in school, as the emphasis shifts from the individual to the group. But as collaboration continues to prove successful around the world, in industries ranging from education to e-commerce, U.S. Americans need to find a balance between the individual and the collective, as our global competitors Japan (IDV 46) and India (IDV 48) have already done (Hofstede 53).

Femininity versus masculinity, Hofstede's third dimension of culture, represents cultural appraisal of traits commonly associated with a specific gender, measuring what individuals tend to value most highly, for instance assertive or modest behavior (80). It is

important to acknowledge that these gender labels are not meant to represent all men or all women, or even to stereotype gender behaviors, but are applied to biological traits that are heightened or lessened with cultural conditioning. Hofstede applies this cultural dimension such that a higher masculine index values traditional gender roles, while a higher feminine index values shared, or blurred gender roles (82-3).

On the masculinity index (MAS), the U.S. scores 62 out of 100, ranking it as slightly more masculine, or more inclined to subscribe to traditional gender roles than the median national groupings (84). This means that, in the U.S.A., some gender roles indeed overlap, but men and women are more likely to fall into traditional gender roles in social, educational, and business settings. For instance, while men and women share parenting responsibilities, women are more inclined to take on a more prominent role. Men are more likely to take on assertive careers in fields such as law and finance, holding higher rankings such as executive-level positions, while women are the traditional nurturers, taking on careers including nursing and teaching. Countries' varying masculinity rankings are apparent in the portrayal of genders in TYA. Such differences can be important for children to witness as they construct their sense of self and family.

Hofstede's fourth cultural dimension is that of uncertainty avoidance (UAI). This dimension reflects cultural reactions toward the unexpected, including the oft-accompanying experiences of nervousness, stress, and anxiety, and the need for predictable behaviors. Or, as Hofstede writes, "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain and unknown situations" (113).

In this index a higher ranking reflects a greater need for reliability and order, to minimize a culture's extreme insecurity and accompanying anxiety. Interestingly, the U.S.'s ranking of 46 is among the lower rankings, while Singapore ranks the lowest at 8 (113). This is counter-intuitive to my experience in Singapore, where my students and

teacher colleagues seemed to crave order and organization in every endeavor, with uncertain outcomes provoking more anxiety than I typically experience in the U.S.

Considering such traits of uncertainty avoidance causes me to question what I missed in Singapore – what happens behind closed doors, or in populations I did not work with? Additionally, I question how my presence as a cultural outsider changed the behaviors I observed, or if perhaps my own cultural inclinations toward uncertainty influenced my interpretations. Furthermore, while Hofstede's indexes are adjusted for decades of cultural patterns and are theoretically resistant to change over time, I question how the recent infusion of business and technology in Singapore has perhaps increased the cultural propensity in avoiding uncertainty; in other words, how has globalization affected the UAI in Singapore? I also consider the Panda's journey in *Little Panda in a Big Big World*. Had he been from another country, would his journey reflect a different degree of risk taking?

While Hofstede's cultural dimensions facilitate reflections of my own international and intercultural experiences, they also help us to consider some of the patterns present in TYA. First, they inform various theatre-making processes, considering aspects of collaboration, stories told, relationships between actors and audience, and so forth. Some of the tensions present as ASSITEJ attempts to reach a truly global network and increase access to TYA arise as individuals with different sets of values convene to make united decisions. Cultural dimensions are also reflected in everything seen onstage, including portrayal of friendships, situational responses, and decision-making processes. International TYA offers youth the opportunity to experience different sets of cultural dimensions acted out, expanding perceptions and questioning patterns of behavior.

In TYA as in life, an increased awareness of international and intercultural trends as defined by the cultural dimensions creates a space for mutual exploration. Once we have agreed to disagree, so to speak, or to interpret events from our own cultural lenses, we can find ways to compromise and attempt to understand other cultural processes. Understanding such cultural differences also decreases judgment. For instance, rather than judging burka or hijab-clad women in Middle-Eastern countries as being anti-feminist or submissive, I can attempt to understand how their cultural propensities for masculinity and power distance support a culture where women take pride in their public dress. Witnessing a hypothetical play's female protagonist costumed in a similar fashion deepens my exposure to where I might develop a respect for her culture and ancestry. And when I visit her country, I might demonstrate my learned respect by covering my arms and legs.

Developing such an understanding is not easy, but is part of a process involving trial and error, requiring self-awareness and patience. As teachers and artists, we may not be able to teach students all the details of cultural dimensions, but we can allow the dimensions to inform our processing and critical analysis. International TYA, with its intrinsic representation of varied sets of cultural dimensions, provides examples of living in diverse contexts. Building an awareness and understanding of multiple cultures is key in developing a global consciousness, through promoting multiple points of view, accepting diverse expectations of "correct" behavior, and subsequently informing us of our own behavior in unfamiliar cultural contexts.

Of course, as globalization progresses, we are as likely to encounter diverse cultural dimensions at home as we are abroad. Fueled by immigration, U.S. demographics are rapidly representing greater national diversity: in 2006, 12.3 percent of the U.S. population was born in another country, a statistic excluding undocumented

immigrants. While this may seem like a small percentage still comprising a minority, Suárez-Orozco argues otherwise: “The United States is in the midst of the largest wave of immigration in its history, with over a million new immigrants per year for a total foreign-born population of over 35 million people” (9). The 2009 U.S. Census reveals a slight increase from 2006, with the foreign-born population reaching 12.5 percent, a staggering 31.6 percent of which have entered the country since 2000 (meaning that in nine years, nearly one-third more number of immigrants arrived than in all of the preceding years combined, accounting for deaths and those returning to their home nations). This census data reveals that the number of immigrants and their percentage of the overall U.S. population are steadily increasing. Accordingly, international TYA not only represents cultural dimensions, identities, and stories from abroad, but also reflects the increasingly diverse audience and population in the U.S.

Of course, rising immigration rates means rising rates of children born to immigrant parents. This demographic shift is largely attributed to the increasing immigration rates highlighted above. Changing birth rate demographics can also be attributed to cultural variations within the U.S. According to their cultural dimensions, various cultural groups in the U.S. have different sized families; as young white families tend to have only one or two children, while Latino and black families tend to have more children, birth rates shift accordingly. Additionally, another product of globalization is the rise of multicultural and multinational households, where parents might come from two or more differing cultures or countries. This means that we are seeing new cultural fusions, and children reared with the influence of multiple cultural dimensions. These changing demographics further demonstrate the need for a global consciousness even in one’s own surroundings.

An international education promotes inclusion of the cultures and nations of all the students in the room: culturally relevant and responsive education. The development of a global consciousness teaches students how to interact with each other despite, and in celebration of, such differences in cultural dimensions. As these skills continue to develop throughout children's education and lived experiences, so too will their cultural respect.

### **3. Fighting Racial Discrimination.**

Respecting cultural diversity is a first step in fighting discrimination. But even so, one is not exempt from discrimination. At the root of discrimination is ethnocentrism, or seeing one's own culture or ethnicity as superior to all others, with those cultural patterns being "right" and all others being "wrong." Hofstede cautions against ethnocentrism's negativity, suggesting that "ethnocentrism is to a people what egocentrism is to an individual: considering one's own little world to be the centre of the universe" (211).

As I consider my own cultural education, I recall teachings that promote such ethnocentrism; most prominently is the idea of Manifest Destiny. A touchstone of U.S. history, Manifest Destiny was the belief in "a divine obligation" for the U.S. westward expansion ([ushistory.org](http://ushistory.org)). In other words, U.S. Americans colonizers were chosen by God to take over more land, grow increasingly superior to their former colonizer of Great Britain, and conquer any first people that stood in their way.

While many contemporary educators condemn and critically analyze this behavior, the sentiment of Manifest Destiny strongly persists in U.S. national culture, contradicting the aims of international education and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The Pledge

of Allegiance, said by children in schools across the U.S. on a daily basis, promotes loyalty to “one nation, under God.” U.S. currency proudly declares “In God we trust.” Such prolific allusions to Manifest Destiny continue to promote the U.S.’s implied superiority to other nations, fueling ethnocentrism. This sentiment becomes further problematic as we consider the Christian values on display in a religiously pluralistic country promoting a separation of church and state. If we deny the religious diversity in our own country, how can we expand our minds to accept people of all religious, or non-religious, cultures around the world?

Another cause of discrimination is stereotyping. The post-September 11, 2001 racial profiling of individuals in the U.S. appearing to be of Arab or Muslim descent, described earlier, was largely founded by stereotyping, or a belief that all people of one cultural group exhibit the same set of characteristics and behaviors; in this case, terrorism. A *Cable News Network* (CNN) article from June 2002, ten months after the New York City attacks, reports U.S. Americans still subject to such racial profiling in air travel, united in discriminatory litigation against airlines:

Among the plaintiffs is Michael Dasrath, a 32-year-old analyst for Morgan Stanley, who was ejected from a Continental flight from Newark to Tampa last New Year's eve. Dasrath, a U.S. citizen of Indian heritage, told CNN that his incident began with the complaint of a single, white female passenger who had been observing him and two other men in their first class seats.

"She basically said these brown-skinned men are behaving suspiciously," Dasrath said. "The pilot didn't say anything. He just kind of nodded at her and he walked up to the front, looked at me, looked at the two in front of me -- didn't say nothing. Next thing I know one of the gate agents is calling our names," he said.

Through encouraging personal connections and experiences, an international education can lessen the incidence of such ethnocentrism and stereotyping. Furthermore, a global consciousness, with its requisite self-awareness, can potentially inform individuals how



to respectfully behave even when such cultural clashes occur, rather than resorting to discriminatory acts.

#### **4. Protecting the Global Environment.**

In a global community, we must identify and act upon global concerns that transcend national borders. One such concern is the sustainability of the physical environment. In our global pursuit of natural resources (oil, coal, precious gems and minerals) and pollution-producing technological advances (factories, automobiles, electricity), we must find a way to conserve and minimize the collective effects of our global carbon footprint. Gutek provides an overview of some of the effects of human consumption on our physical environment, each of which was catastrophic in scope, affecting people and resources globally, and resulting from the collective demands and actions of the global community:

Among the causes of a deteriorating natural environment are the effects of acid rain in the Northern Hemisphere as windborne industrial pollutants degrade woodlands and lakes. The deforestation of the world's rain forests further weakens the planet's ecological balance. The expansion of the deserts, caused by prolonged drought, produces famine conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Further, a number of oil spills, such as that of the *Exxon Valdez*, seriously damages plant and animal life in offshore Alaska. The explosion and meltdown of the Soviet nuclear reactor at Chernobyl in Ukraine resulted in loss of life and harmful consequences to human and environmental health...was not limited to the Soviet Union, but was carried across frontiers to other countries... (12).

A global consciousness entails an understanding of an individual's actions and the potential consequences on the environment. Never has the old adage been more true, that if I turn off the lights in one room, it may not seem to make a huge difference; but if millions of people around the world, turn off millions of lights in millions of rooms, the affect on our natural resources is astronomical. Therefore, I must not discount the

amplified affects of my individual action. For instance, the Hong Kong pollution represented onstage in *Little Panda in a Big Big World* influenced me to consider the similar effects of pollution in the U.S., and the interdependence of pollution in these countries.

## **5. Understanding Human Rights.**

Additional worldwide concerns of our global community are issues of human rights, including poverty, access to health care, and human trafficking. These matters require countries and organizations to unite: “Tackling these issues requires a global mindset and cooperation in decision making and problem solving” (Patel 36).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was written in 1948, establishing basic rights for people around the world. Among these rights are equality, fairness, non-discrimination, personal security, freedom, and prevention of human torture including cruel and unusual punishment. Patel argues for the inclusion of human rights in international education in order for students to learn to speak up for themselves and for others: “We need to become aware that while we claim, defend and fight for human rights, we should also respect the human rights of other people” (85-7). Additionally, the oft-unpleasant act of learning about a country’s own violation of human rights, such as the U.S.’s controversial waterboarding at Guantanamo Bay (a form of torture that mimics drowning in order to force prisoners to reveal military secrets), allows global citizens to critically assess their country’s own practices. Seeing flaws in a host-country as such, can also potentially dissuade ethnocentrism. Another advantage of including human rights in a holistic international education, and introducing it to students via international TYA, is students’ ability to passionately rally around the issues. As students have proven

time and again, learning about such rights, and their international violations, prompts them to take action as engaged citizens of the global community.

## **6. Accepting Basic Social Values.**

The goal to accept basic social values most clearly points toward a global consciousness, as it advocates for civic engagement and socialization across cultural dimensions, corresponding with the global consciousness' aim of existing in a globalized world. This goal also aligns with TYA, which creates opportunities for audience members to engage in stories highlighting shared values and experiences; just as the cultural dimensions highlight differences, they reveal similarities.

Countries that may seem to operate from dissimilar social patterns and values may actually be quite alike, as in Japan and Argentina's shared score of 46 on the individualism index (53), or Hong Kong and Greece's joint index of 57 for masculinity (84). Greater similarities are revealed, however, when we consider that all of these dimensions are based upon basic human behaviors and pattern recognition. In order to have a power distance index, there must be positions of relative authority in a culture; similarly, to create a gender index, we must agree that, for example, women are biological nurturers and people need to be nurtured.

Accepting basic social values entails an understanding of the individual's role in different contexts and communities. Knowing the self, and the position in a family or a close community like a school, enables one to critically survey his or her role as a global citizen. Upon this self-realization, a global consciousness, a way of being, can be achieved.

When understood and internalized, the six goals examined here become the foundation of an active global consciousness. The next chapter more closely examines international TYA as a component of international education, and the ways in which it too can potentially increase global consciousness.

### **Chapter 3: The Potential of International TYA to Increase the Global Consciousness of Young Audiences in the United States**

*“[Children’s] involvement during the performance is intense and sometimes they lose themselves in the fiction; this means that they do not maintain the distance between a real life situation and a theatrical situation.”*  
-Shifra Schonmann<sup>3</sup>

Considering the simultaneous globalization of TYA and education, this chapter examines how international TYA functions as a component of international education, with the potential to increase the global consciousness of young audiences in the U.S. The plays specified in this research, and others for which the same theories apply, are fully mounted professional productions (as opposed to written scripts or performed readings) created and produced for audiences in their own country. These plays then access the networks established by ASSITEJ and IPAY to tour internationally, including to the U.S., creating opportunities for global theatre exchange.

#### **CULTURAL PROCESSING OF TYA**

While the focus of professional TYA, as all professional theatre, should be artistic rather than educational in scope, the educational values inherent in TYA cannot be denied. As children constantly absorb and categorize new information, educational values lie in nearly every childhood endeavor. Augment that by the sensory, emotional, and community opportunities presented by theatre productions such as those discovered by Alice Minnie Herts and Jane Addams in the 1900’s, TYA at its best carries great power to educate *through* the art. British TYA scholar Matthew Reason likens TYA’s

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<sup>3</sup> *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations*, 65

educational scope to the ubiquitous 21<sup>st</sup> century categorization of anything relating to children as education: “Theatre for children *does* exist within the overlapping spheres of education and theatre – not least because almost all children’s activity, right or wrongly, tends to be considered at least partly through the prism of education” (13).

Shifra Schonmann, an Israeli TYA scholar, offers another perspective of “the non-educational education of the theatrical experience” (42). In Schonmann’s framework, children learn through the experience of theatre, in which a production draws them in as active participants. Cited as a factor in such a “non-educational education” is the same commitment to art and theatricality mentioned in previous chapters. A strong TYA production, with dynamic design and performance components, accesses children’s “need to consider theatrical elements, the artistic and the aesthetic,” as well as their “need to relate to cultural aspects” (42). Prominent here is the audience’s *need*. Children are naturally curious, and when inspired and excited, as are often the outcomes of watching plays, they access their natural penchants to learn and explore both art and culture.

TYA’s educational and artistic nature is closely tied to, as Schonmann identifies, its culture of origin. U.S. American and Dutch TYA scholar Manon van de Water insists “TYA [is a] cultural production as rooted in and part of the social, cultural, ideological, economic, and political conditions under which it is generated and perceived” (16). Danish TYA scholar Beth Junker expands on van de Water’s claims, suggesting that the degree of cultural reflection is based on the strength of a production’s aesthetics. The multiple dimensions of theatrical aesthetics both reinforce and spread its cultural perspectives:

In artistic productions, in cultural politics, and in cultural communication, the dynamic relations between these popular cultural traditions, rooted in our bodies and practiced in both daily life and in artistic developments, are the crucial point. Meeting and dealing with art...is at the heart of these dynamic relations, securing

that our popular daily culture and its practice stay alive and are consistently transformed and developed (16).

Junker's performances support and promote a "popular daily culture," through the theatrical convention of *mise en scène*, in which all production aspects aim to unite, presented to the audience as a complete entity. "*Mise en scène* is an object of knowledge, a network of associations or relationships uniting the different stage materials into signifying systems, created both by production (the actors, the director, the stage in general) and reception (the spectators)" (Pavis 1992, 25). As a result, each unique production component represents the playmakers' culture and cultural dimensions, as does the complete production. It is then the audience's job to receive and interpret this series of culturally specific signals.

When the young audience familiar with the culture of the play, their expectations and experiences may be reinforced as they engage in the story. To illustrate such cultural ties, I consider a U.S. American play. In Gabriel Jason Dean's *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño*, child bullies call another character "gay" in a derogatory manner. Recognizing the U.S. cultural taboo of name-calling, and specifically using "gay" in such an offensive manner, young audiences in the U.S. consistently partake in a collective gasp when this insult is shouted. In addition to what I interpret as shock at hearing someone say "gay" so insultingly, the audience's reactions during *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño* stem from accessing their own imaginations and lived experiences. As such, the young audience members may expand this event in their minds, perhaps adding details and playing out hypothetical outcomes based on personal experiences and observations. Of course, even different communities in the U.S. might react to this play's event differently, given specific references and experiences.

Research on the ways young audiences process plays suggests that children's imaginations and lived experiences are evoked in such a manner. Matthew Reason asked young audience members to draw pictures of moments in a play and then explain them to him, in an effort to understand how children process theatre and *mise en scène*. The children in his study exhibited comprehensive and detailed understandings of "extremely complex theatrical languages," which Reason attributes primarily to their subconscious combination of on-stage images and events with those of their imaginations (87). Interpreting plays in this manner reveals deep levels of processing as young audiences' interpretations require positioning the play's events within real-life external influencers. One child in Reason's study created a particularly detailed and rich back-story for characters in a play, for which he provides the following explanation and validation:

This is an example of how children transform the material fact of the performance – that is, what they saw on the stage – into the referential – that is, what was evoked by the performance or, more colloquially, what they saw in their mind's eye. The facility with which the children [created alternate truths] demonstrates that they completely *got* the performance (86-7).

In *The Transition of Doodle Pequeño* and the plays in Reason's study, young audiences exhibit deep processing of plays from their own culture, reflecting their learned cultural dimensions. When a play is performed internationally, and one set of cultural dimensions is presented onstage for an audience of different cultural dimensions, an additional layer of processing takes place. Now that the play is being performed in a new culture, the audience must work harder to interpret the unfamiliar aspects of its culturally specific *mise en scène*. As production qualities specific to one culture are now experienced and interpreted through another cultural lens, a degree of intercultural processing must occur.



Intercultural performance theorist Patrice Pavis likens the process of intercultural exchange to an hourglass. The foreign culture, here an international TYA play, starts at the top, the wide end of the hourglass. Each aspect of the play, including the set, costumes, actors, direction, language, movement patterns, etc., is culturally infused and represented by one particle of sand. Together, at the top of the hourglass, they compose that unique theatrical production, with each grain of sand aligned in a culturally specific manner. While experienced as a whole, only one grain of sand can transfer through the narrow part of the hourglass at a time. In the context of a play, only one aspect can truly be interpreted at a time, such as a character's movements or the fabric on a sofa. Then, as each grain of sand, or each play component, is considered, it travels to the base of the hourglass. But here, the particles fall into different places than they began, as they have been interpreted anew by the host culture. As such, each piece of sand, or each play component, is itself the same; but their arrangement, their cultural specificity, has changed. The hourglass represents intercultural processing, as two different cultures influence the original play to make for a similar, yet modified, play-going experience. While the play always stays the same, its ordering, processing, and interpretation is subject to rearrangement in each host culture (Pavis 1992, 4-5).

Considering Reason and Pavis' models of theatrical interpretation and intercultural exchange, TYA's impact on children's educational and cultural development continues to come into focus. Building on these models' complex processing and mental engagement, I return to the notion of a global consciousness. If the goal of international education is to develop a global consciousness, how does international TYA access this mode of processing? To begin to answer this question, I will divide the global consciousness into the three components suggested by Mansilla and Gardner – global

sensitivity, global understanding, and global self – examining the different levels of international and intercultural exposure at each step.

## **GLOBAL SENSITIVITY**

Global sensitivity reflects “our awareness of local experience as a manifestation of broader developments in the planet” (Mansilla and Gardner 59). In other words, global sensitivity entails recognizing that a learned system is but one system, and the global cultures entertain many ways to do and be. From another perspective, it requires that one becomes sensitive to the similarities and differences of people, ideas, and of course cultures, around the world, to achieve a global consciousness. With TYA’s intrinsic representation of its culture of origin, this section analyzes how culture is demonstrated and shared at its most basic level. Congruent to global sensitivity, I will promote TYA as a vehicle to becoming sensitive to, or aware of, new and different cultures as a component of global consciousness.

Theatre’s ability to extend individuals’ perceptions and worldly knowledge is not a new idea and many already imbue TYA with such potential. In addition to TYA scholars and practitioners, including those referenced in this thesis, other teachers and artists working with children recognize TYA’s influences. For example, Matthew Reason cites a teacher’s advocacy for TYA’s artistic and cultural impact on child development:

[When experiencing theatre, children] get a different worldview, perhaps going from being very narrow to a very wide one. They see aesthetic quality, where they wouldn’t have seen aesthetic quality before. The increased worldview gives them higher expectations and higher confidence (9).

How is it then, that TYA expands a worldview, thereby increasing one's global sensitivity? That brings us back to the notion of theatre as culture, that every aspect of *mise en scène* is informed by, and reflects, the production's host culture. The cultural aspects reflected at the level of global sensitivity are part of the surface culture. Patel describes surface culture as aspects of a culture that can be easily observed – the tip of the metaphoric cultural iceberg (28). The surface culture present in plays includes, but is not limited to, language, costume, and cultural references (religion, events, and so forth): “[Cultural] manifestations of symbols can be various and diverse, not only verbal but also non-verbal such as artefacts, buildings, handicrafts, carvings, manners, gestures, colours, and numbers” (Patel 27).

Through this network of cultural symbols, one way to discern global sensitivity is through observation of similarities and differences in surface culture. Through my experience of *Hitler's Daughter*, I witnessed a myriad of dimensions of surface culture that both aligned with and differed from my own cultural experiences. For instance, the young Australian characters behaved much like my U.S. American students, playing one moment and arguing the next, obeying the informal yet strict rules of social hierarchy determined by age and size. Yet a discernable difference in their surface culture was their Australian dialect, novel and enchanting to my foreign ears. Every so often, aspects of Australian English including culturally specific words, phrases, and expressions, would further remind me that the story was contextualized in another culture – two countries (the U.S. and Australia) both united and separated by a common language.

Another aspect of surface culture was the costuming. The characters wore school uniforms, which I knew from my travels are standard for Australian students. However, in the U.S. where student attire is determined by individual schools and districts, I associate uniforms with either public or magnet urban schools or private religious

schools. While this observation of my own culture is admittedly narrow in scope, and quite stereotyped (in fact, I attended a private religious school for eight years, and did not wear a uniform), it remains that while sitting in the theatre, I was exposed to a different cultural norm regarding student uniforms. Without a pre-existing familiarity of Australian school uniform culture from my travels, I wonder if I might have viewed the child characters differently? How do the stereotypes within one culture impact interpretations of another culture? What does this aspect of surface culture reveal to young audience members?

As these aspects of surface culture are further examined, cultural dimensions are revealed in the actors' spatial relationships, patterns of physical and eye contact, and so forth. Through experiencing international plays, young audiences can begin to identify and understand these differing cultural patterns. While a mainstream U.S. American child – constantly reminded by a parent to look at whoever is speaking – may not understand why, for instance, a young Chinese character does not make eye contact with her grandfather, the mere recognition of this trait expands the child's worldview, accessing her developing global sensitivity. At the same time, the U.S. American child may discover similarities with the Chinese character's surface culture, perhaps a shared game, that creates an opportunity to identify with someone who may seem at first so very different. Furthermore, the development of a global consciousness encourages individuals to look beyond differing behaviors, suspending judgment to consider the world in a more pluralistic manner.

While the hypothetical example above is faulty as the lack of eye contact can as easily be attributed to the characters and their relationship to one another as to their culture, it still demonstrates surface culture markers at play. Through the increased awareness of diverse cultural traits and dimensions that international TYA provides, a de-

centering process occurs, wherein a child begins to recognize that his or her own culture is indeed just one of many. This process is key to recognizing diversity, fighting discrimination, and accepting basic social values, establishing a foundation for global consciousness.

### **GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING**

Global understanding contributes to global consciousness by developing “our capacity to think in flexible and informed ways about contemporary worldwide developments” (Mansilla and Gardner 59). I interpret global understanding as an analysis of one’s own culture in relation to other cultures. Whereas surface culture represents the tip of an iceberg, deep culture, what we encounter in global understanding, represents everything under the water’s surface, including personal and social values, wants, and dreams (Patel 28).

Deep culture cannot be observed as simply as surface culture, and is experienced in TYA through the characters and story, and discovered via interpretation, engagement, and personal reflection. Through recognizing the intersections of deep culture across national borders, children begin to see themselves as part of a global community. The questions I asked myself before and after *Hitler’s Daughter* reflect movement toward deep culture and global understanding. They acknowledge the traditions and values of my Jewish culture, while situating my American identity in relation to Australia. Recognizing, in response to the play, that my identification with the Holocaust is more aligned with my global Jewish culture than my U.S. American culture, my worldview has

expanded, as has my understanding of personal belonging: my multiple cultural identifications join to shape my reactions to artistic representations.

It is in this regard that TYA has the potential to instill global understanding in young audiences. Take, for example, South Korean play *Dallae's Story*, which I experienced in Malmö, Sweden at the 2011 ASSITEJ Congress. This play depicts a family's serene country life disrupted by the Korean War. From its beginning, "when the family was not rich, but together and happy," deep Korean cultural values, including the emphasis of the familial bond over monetary wealth, are prominently showcased (Park 8). What I find most compelling about this play in the context of global understanding are its depictions of war and usage of language. Unlike the shock and awe tactics so often depicting war in the United States, this depiction of war in *Dallae's Story* was quite peaceful, with subtle shifts of light, delicate tempo changes, and a single gunshot. While the otherwise peaceful setting amplified the startling sound of the gun, and the atmosphere aligned with the play's traditional aesthetics, this representation also demonstrates cultural perceptions of war. As *Dallae's* pre and post war worlds are filled with "games that all Korean children are familiar with," the story remains focused on the family life, "bridg[ing] a general Korean childhood experience with another broad Korean experience – the Korean War" (Park 8). As the play continues to highlight such manifestations of deep culture, international audiences are exposed to Korean representations of family, childhood, and war.

Also revealing of *Dallae's Story* in the context of global understanding is the lack of spoken dialogue. As indicated in the discussion of global sensitivity, spoken language

is a strong marker of surface culture. Yet *Dallae's Story* nonverbally drew me into the story through stunning displays of puppetry, movement, and music. On an international level, telling the story through these shared languages increases audience access (without the need for translations or supertitles, for example), while also creating more space for individual imagination and interpretation. As examined previously, the more a play stimulates a child's imagination, the deeper connection she or he may form in the context of his or her own lived experiences. As *Dallae's Story* transfers from its Korean identity, through Pavis' hourglass as interpreted by a U.S. child, there are more opportunities for resulting pieces to be arranged – in other words, without the limits of a spoken language, there are increased opportunities for the U.S. child to connect his or her own cultural experience to that of the play.

Sharing and exchanging cultural beliefs and values, as experienced in plays like *Dallae's Story*, is essential to fighting cultural discrimination, as learning about other cultures can inspire interest and eventual understanding and empathy with individuals of diverse cultures (Patel 11). In global understanding, cultural values are on display; TYA encompasses them in a story, allowing audiences to explore from the comfort of their seat and the security of their own cultural system.

## **GLOBAL SELF**

Global self, the third aspect of global consciousness as delineated by Mansilla and Gardner, describes recognizing the individual as a part of the interconnected global community: “a perception of ourselves as global actors, a sense of planetary belongings and membership in humanity that guides our actions and prompts our civic

commitments” (Mansilla and Gardner 59). Development of the global self is the most important aspect of a global consciousness, and the most uniquely suited to theatre’s provocation of empathy. Briefly addressed in the preceding sections, empathy is at the heart of the theatre experience, with the potential to deeply connect the audience to the characters.

Empathy is also a central force in international education, as it connects diverse people through shared emotions, experiences, and human values. Despite differences in surface and deep cultures, “global education seeks to foster within learners perspective-taking and empathy for the lived experience of diverse communities, and to encourage active participation in devising strategies and solutions for the future” (Patel, 80). In this manner, empathy becomes essential to achieving international education’s goals through its realization of diverse perspectives. Such an active state prepares for the active nature of a global consciousness, dependent upon a fluid view of the self within the world.

Theatre too is active, as engaging plays will involve audiences in the characters’ journeys: “...making the audience work, making them contribute their imagination to a production and through doing so making them think and feel” (Reason 39). U.S. American TYA scholar Jeanne Klein recognizes the active emotional state of watching a play, insisting that children “‘have deeply moving experiences, hold images from these experiences in their memories, and think critically’” (Reason 39-40). Theatre, as analyzed in this document, has the potential to provoke the audience’s empathy. It is this emotional depth that allows young audiences to empathize with characters onstage and “‘enter into protagonists’ realities’” as if they themselves were in the situation (Reason 105).

Such investment in international TYA activates the global consciousness as empathy surpasses cultural differences, creating opportunities to know someone as an



individual, beyond national associations. As such, audience members and characters become joint global citizens, engaged in the same active world rather than cultural representations and assumptions. While the aesthetic *mise en scène* of surface and deep culture may interest children in novel cultural traits stimulating understanding and comparison, it is empathy that instills a personal connection to the characters and story representing varied cultural dimensions. In fact, Hofstede identifies such shared emotions and needs as the foundation of his cultural dimensions:

The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming [called culture] (5).

Empathy experienced through international TYA, across various sets of cultural dimensions and individual differences, creates opportunities for audience members of one national origin to relate to characters from diverse cultures, countries, and contexts. When I empathized with the Panda's struggles to find a home in *Little Panda in a Big Big World*, I de-emphasized our notable differences, including his being a panda and a Hong Kong citizen, to focus on our shared experiences of needing shelter and love. Engaged in *Dallae's Story*, I considered how I might react if I lost a loved one to war.

To further analyze this concept, I draw upon the South African play *Every Year, Every Day, I am Walking* produced by Magnet Theatre, which I saw in Sweden during the 2011 ASSITEJ Congress. Drawing upon the history of South Africa during Apartheid, and current racial discrimination, *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking* follows the journey of a young girl and her mother as they are forcefully evicted from their home and embark on a quest to find a place of safety and belonging.

This production reflects surface culture of South Africa through its English dialect, personal interactions (including moments of touch between the mother and

daughter), aesthetics (including differently styled shoes used as metaphors throughout), and power dynamics of women and other marginalized populations. Deep culture is revealed through the characters' experiences in the story: the girl dreams of finding a home and safety, representing the extent to which she values each. She is devastated at the death of her sister, revealing the deep personal and cultural bonds between siblings. She struggles to understand such hatred and persecution. While I am not, nor have I ever been, a refugee, these representations provoked empathy. When my "heart broke" over the sister's death, I forgot about our cultural and geographic distances, empathizing with the girl's loss. Such empathy elicited deep ties between our different cultures, as shared human experiences, values, and dreams situated the character and me as two players in our shared global community.

Such a degree of global self informs a global consciousness in highlighting the characters' humanity rather than relying on pity or judgment of their refugee situation. My experience leads me to hypothesize that U.S. American children will also empathize with the girl. In fact, young audiences' empathy might be deeper than mine as "[children's] involvement during the performance is intense and sometimes they lose themselves in the fiction; this means that they do not maintain the distance between a real life situation and a theatrical situation" (Schonmann 65). Active empathy in a story such as *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking* stimulates global consciousness through instilling a personal involvement in and reaction to contemporary worldwide events.

In a document published by the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network (ITYARN) discussing the cultural relevance of the plays at the 2011 ASSITEJ Congress, South African playwright Karen Jeynes addresses the ways international audiences experience this play: "audiences outside of South Africa miss some of the smaller references [surface culture], but respond more strongly to the

metanarrative [deep culture]” (11). It is this recognition of a metanarrative, the reflection of deep culture and shared experiences, which enhance a global understanding and subsequently global self. While U.S. American audiences may not understand the lingering implications of Apartheid, or the specific discrimination faced by the characters, we can transfer them to our own national and personal perceptions. Knowing the history is not so important, when understanding the shared humanity positions us as members of the same global community.

Jeynes also cites an increase of attacks in South Africa targeting immigrants during the original South African tour of *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking*. These attacks, similar to those in the play, escalated to “the most horrific outbreaks of xenophobic attacks in South Africa” (10). Responding to this violence and the country’s increasingly dire refugee situation, the production’s artists intentionally aimed

to use the show to try and shift people’s perceptions. They wanted to engage people with empathy and openness and encourage small shifts. Transformation doesn’t happen overnight, but occasionally a flash will spark, and something will connect. Every attempt to engage and open people up to different life views – particularly young people – will have an effect on their way of interacting with the world” (9).

While the artists aimed to shift perceptions of a local audience, research on young audiences’ empathy suggests that international productions are also capable of fostering such transformations, or subtler transportations, in international audiences. Such intense empathetic connections as I experienced might also increase young audiences’ awareness of local populations that are similarly marginalized or persecuted, such as the plight of immigrants in the U.S. Aligned with a global consciousness, the same audiences might subsequently re-consider their actions and feelings toward them. While this may be an idealistic perspective, such a personal transportation and increased awareness is not beyond the impacts of theatre.

In fact, Jonathan Levy argues it is through these lingering emotions that theatre teaches: “the theatre teaches most lastingly by *what it causes us to retain of what we have felt* – by what lies alive but dormant in us when the theatrical experience is over.” After the characters and events of the play have left our memories, Levy continues, our emotional experience remains, subject to return as a sort of theatrical *déjà vu*. As I try to recall plays I saw long ago, I realize I agree with Levy’s account. While the words and actions of so many past plays now escape me, my emotional memories remind me of their diverse experiences.

I apply Levy’s theory to the experience of the global self. As an adult, I remember only linger moments and images from plays I saw as a child. However, my emotional recall is vivid. It is with this in mind that I pose the following scenario: a U.S. American child experiences *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking* at a young age. Years later, when the play and its characters have been forgotten, the child remembers the emotional experience and retains a sense of empathy for a child’s journey as a refugee in South Africa. Thus, I query, even after a play is forgotten, might the emotions, the empathy, and the cultural connections remain? How might this internal connection impact that child’s future interactions with foreign people and cultures, as a component of his or her global consciousness?

The productions discussed in this document represent only a small representation of international TYA, and my subjective experiences of their meaning and cultural transfers do not necessarily indicate that other audience members, adult or children, will be as engaged as I was. However, the research of Reason, Schonmann, and others continues to demonstrate children’s complex capacities to be engaged in plays’ events, often more deeply than adults. Children’s intricate interpretations and fluid perceptions

of fact and fiction inspire deep empathetic connections, encouraging development of global consciousness.

At the same time, however, a challenge of international TYA is that it can also reinforce, or create new stereotypes. Promoting stereotypes goes against the goals of international education, thereby weakening global consciousness. Returning to the ideals of Alice Minnie Herts, Sara Spencer, and Winifred Ward reminds us to insist on TYA of the absolute highest quality of story, aesthetics, and overall *mise en scène*. Presenting the best examples of international TYA to U.S. American young audiences will engage them beyond negative portrayals of diversity and stereotyping, focusing instead on the empathetic experience of an individual's journey within a specific set of cultural dimensions. Developing a global consciousness in a global community requires that international TYA shares stories that look beyond the stereotypes and surface culture to investigate the deep culture, the values, dreams and ultimately the stories of children around the world.

## Chapter 4: What Comes Next?

*“We have researched drama projects with children and young people...But we have almost no research in theatre for children as an art form. We know it, we appreciate it, but we don’t research it.”*

-Beth Junker<sup>4</sup>

### PRESENTING INTERNATIONAL TYA IN THE U.S.

As examined in this document, my experiences and published research points to the potential of international TYA to increase the developing global consciousness of young audiences in the U.S. Through developing global sensitivity, global understanding, and global self, international TYA presents diverse cultures and stories to young audiences, aligning with the goals of international education. By introducing diverse cultural principles of appropriate behavior, international TYA has the potential to combat dangerous stereotypes and ethnocentrism in representing the many systems that coexist in our global community. Through characters that reflect specific cultural dimensions and individual characteristics, opportunities are created for young audiences to rehearse their interactions with people, cultures, and ideas both similar to and different from their own, ultimately developing a pluralistic perspective and global consciousness.

Additional benefits to young audiences’ experiences of international TYA briefly touched upon in this document include exposure to traditional art forms, diverse aesthetics, collaboration processes, and technologies. However, as a global consciousness is essential to success in the global era, and international TYA offers many avenues for nurturing its development in young audiences, I encourage U.S. presenters of TYA to consider the intercultural benefits of their productions, as relates to specific plays and the audiences in their communities. As U.S. American schools increasingly demand

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<sup>4</sup> *What’s The Meaning? The Relations between Professional Theatre Performances and Children’s Cultural Life*, 21

curricular ties to bring students to plays, presenters should consider the research here and the research yet to come that promotes international TYA as a vehicle to develop global awareness and increased cultural perspectives. As suggested in chapter two, such a global education is perhaps a greater asset to 21<sup>st</sup> century education than traditional curricular ties of history and literature.

At the same time, I also recognize some of the challenges innate in presenting international work. Resulting from various cultural dimensions, what is deemed appropriate for young audiences varies internationally. As explored in the second chapter, nudity is as easily embraced by one culture as it is considered taboo by another culture. Kosovoan playwright Jeton Neziraj recognizes the inherent value of approaching culturally variable taboos in TYA, acknowledging “our responsibility as theatre artists: to challenge society – every kind of society” (Blackwell 18). Croatian playwright and director Lana Šarić confronts the audience with taboos, challenging them to process the taboos by engaging the same mental processing present in Reason’s research. “Talking about topics [Šarić finds] interesting not in the most literal ways, and provoking audiences’ sensibility and forcing them to create their own meanings” (Blackwell 18-19).

To encourage young audiences to process such taboos, and other ideas emerging in performances, I encourage presenters to couple international plays with educational programming including post-show discussions and study guides. Such programming deepens audiences’ play-going experiences while heightening their international and intercultural processing, and subsequent global consciousness. Karen Jeynes promotes these activities corresponding to *Every Year, Every Day, I Am Walking*:

“[The play] is performed in conjunction with workshops and an activity book created by Magnet [Theatre], to try and maximize the impact of the production and use the performance as a catalyst for a deeper engagement with the issues it

explores. The booklet also looks at art in many forms, and how young people can experience and engage with this for themselves” (11).

As Jeynes advocates, educational programming posits “the performance as a catalyst,” with corresponding activities providing opportunities for young audience members to reflect on the play, and to rehearse its intersections with, and relevance to, their lives.

### **A NEED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Of the many limitations to this research, time was a prominent factor. Additional time to synthesize more extensive research might reveal greater discoveries and increased intersections and challenges of global consciousness and international TYA. Another limitation was my inability to research the audience reception of international TYA. There is a need for additional research that includes engagement with children before and after international TYA experiences, as well as studies of international TYA and its ties to classroom explorations of international cultures and lived experiences.

Additionally, I recognize that theatrical experiences are individual for every child and every play. As the theatrical and cultural examples analyzed in this document are based on my adult world-traveled and theatrically literate perspectives, there are inherent flaws in my assumptions that the experiences will transfer to young audiences of differing cultural identities and personalities from mine. However, I have consulted research where possible, to consider the transferability of ideas and experiences.

Further limitations relate to the plays themselves. First, this research is limited to plays written in, or translated to, English, as well as non-verbal plays such as *Dallae's Story*. This not only limits the selection of plays, but also the perceived audience. While I engaged in *Little Panda in a Big Big World* across language barriers, I cannot assume



the same for others. Immigrant children or children of immigrants in the U.S. might be more fluent in a language other than English, so their perceptions of and reactions to English-language plays will likely differ from children who speak and think only in English. Additionally, a play in translation has inherently changed from its original *mise en scène* and is no longer authentic to its cultural specificity. While language is a key factor in surface culture, it also reveals deep culture through thought processes and the specific meanings and intentions of words and ideas.

Additionally, contemporary theatre itself is often a product of globalization with the proliferation of the exchange of theatrical ideas and languages. While a play may be from one country, it likely includes aspects of intercultural and international performance including story influences, movement styles, and acknowledgment of great artists and practitioners who came before. Such intercultural borrowing, whether or not the artists are aware of their choices, innately means that many productions represent more than their own culture.

The next challenge I will address is also a caution. I have been privileged to experience some of the best TYA productions in the world. The plays I have chosen to discuss in this document are ones I believe to be of exceptional quality and integrity. While I recognize that others may disagree with my subjective opinions of these productions, I also recognize that there are some truly uninspired TYA productions in the world. For every excellent play I have experienced, there are two more I wish I could forget. I recognize the dangers in such poor productions representing all TYA – national and international – when audiences and presenters have not experienced the truly inspired and inspiring TYA around the world.

I also recognize the dangers for these plays to perpetuate or create new stereotypes. I recently saw a particularly unsuccessful production that happens to be my

only cultural or artistic experience from a specific European country. This play featured a series of unconnected vignettes emphasizing unimpressive stage tricks rather than story and character. While I know this is only one cultural product, I recognize that my human nature will cause me to doublethink my next opportunity to experience a play from that country, for fears that it will be the same. While I acknowledge this cultural artistic stereotyping, I also recognize that without my resilient global consciousness, such an artistic stereotype could translate to stereotyping the culture and people from that country.

With such dangers present, I once again return to Winifred Ward, whose emphasis on TYA of the highest quality is as salient now as it was in 1958:

We want not merely ‘good’ plays but really fine ones. We want playwrights who are artists, who not only know the theatre but who care deeply about children and about writing for child audiences. We can make the children’s field exciting and worthy of great writers if we enhance the best of our available scripts with imaginative directing and fresh, experimental staging. We can set high standards in the beauty and significance of our productions and develop in our children sensitivity of the life values we see on the stage (69).

As practitioners, artists, and presenters, we need to continue to demand the highest quality TYA in the U.S. and around the world. Excellent, challenging, insightful, provocative productions exist, and as a field, we need to focus our energies on increasing audience access to these productions, and to our research about them.

Throughout my research, I discovered how current my questions are. This is both exciting, and challenging. Exciting, as I recognized just how aligned my observations and research endeavors are with some of the most established international TYA scholars. Challenging, as many of my key questions are still unanswered, for the scholars I studied are posing the same queries. Manon van de Water, ITYARN Chair, identifies such questions provoking discussion at the Bursa International TYA festival in 2007 in

Turkey: “What and who are international festivals for and how? Are international festivals the way to promote cultural diversity?” (19).

That these questions exist, and are yet unanswered, leads me to the recommendation that TYA scholars continue to research the cultural implications of TYA extending beyond cultural and national borders. While there is a growing body of literature on international and intercultural processes, encompassing drama classrooms and artistic collaborations, the role of professional TYA across national boundaries is largely unexplored. Beth Junker, Danish TYA Scholar, echoed these ideas in a call to action during the ITYARN conference at the 2011 ASSITEJ Congress.

We have research and studies in children and childhood from a sociological, a pedagogical, a psychological, even a cultural point of view. We have researched drama projects with children and young people, hoping to demonstrate that the possibility to be part of a creative collective process will support the marginalized, etc. We have research in literature for children. But we have almost no research in theatre for children *as an art form*. We know it, we appreciate it, but we don't research it. Almost no research in the different relations and different meanings between children and professional performances in a social and educational context and almost no research in the relations between professional performances and children's cultural communities in a cultural spare time context. Here [at ITYARN] we postulate, here we have opinions, here we come and believe, but in fact we don't know (19).

As Junker identifies, the extensive research to come out of ITYARN in the past six years is just the beginning. Much of the research corresponding to international TYA focuses primarily on productions and audiences in one country, and processes of international exchange between artists. While I honor the significance of these streams of research, I also recognize the need to also examine the affects of professional productions when presented to international audiences.

As a high school theatre teacher in the U.S., I will continue to interrogate the questions posed in this document as relevant to my students and curricula. I will create opportunities to explore international TYA and global consciousness as we analyze scripts from around the world, and relate them to our unique lived experiences. I will seek out opportunities for us to experience international TYA, and engage with the artists in a mutual exploration of our cultures and countries. The research presented in this thesis document marks the beginning of my process in considering the intersections of international TYA and global consciousness; as a teacher, I will now put these ideas and theories into practice, creating opportunities for my students to expand their worldviews, while I continue to contribute to the literature and research on international TYA.

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